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Letter dated 20 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the statement by women parliamentarians of the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at drawing the attention of the international community to the pernicious effects of the war on women (see annex).

The women parliamentarians of the Democratic Republic of the Congo consider that the war is destroying any attempt the country is making to free women from poverty.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) André **Mwamba Kapanga**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Democratic Republic of the Congo
Constituent and Legislative Assembly
Parliament of Transition

Statement by women parliamentarians on the occasion of the world march of women in New York, 15 October 2000

Madam President,

Sisters of the whole world,

Women parliamentarians of the Democratic Republic of the Congo salute the initiative of the Fédération des Femmes du Québec in organizing on this day, 15 October 2000, in the superb city of New York in the United States of America, a World March of Women against poverty and violence inflicted on women. They consider that the time has come to pay due homage to all Congolese women fighting for freedom who gave their blood in defence of their nation's sovereignty, who lost their lives, their husbands, their daughters and their sons, their fathers and their brothers, in an absurd war which enabled Rwandans, Burundians and Ugandans freely to plunder the precious raw materials of the Democratic Republic of the Congo while getting the international community to believe that their troops were in the country to ensure security along the common borders. The entire international community now knows that the Rwandans, the Ugandans and the Burundians are really on Congolese soil where on three occasions they even clashed over the control of the gold and diamond mines in the Eastern Province.

Women parliamentarians of the Democratic Republic of the Congo consider that this war is destroying any effort the country is making to free women from poverty.

The war means that many young Congolese girls are not able to get normal schooling. It has been proved that education in a developing country like ours enables women to protect their health and that of their families, to plan their families, and to participate freely in the political, social and economic life of their country.

In short, education enables women to overcome poverty and to embark on the road to development. A girl who gets no schooling today will be a woman who is poor tomorrow. Depriving women of education is a form of violence inflicted on them.

That is why the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have decided not to abandon the struggle, despite the inertia and silence of the international community in the face of the dramatic plight of the people of the Congo since 2 August 1998. They have undertaken acts of resistance against the country's aggressors.

- The women of Kisangani in the Eastern Province launched an appeal for civil disobedience by refusing to pay taxes and to buy goods plundered by the Ugandans and Rwandans. This was to denounce the plundering of diamonds, gold, coffee and wood, and the cruel destruction of Congolese fauna, flora and basic infrastructure.

- The organization of sit-ins in embassies and United Nations organizations to protest against the crime of Congolese women being buried alive at Mwenga in the Province of South Kivu.

- In Bukavu Congolese women stopped work for a week to protest at their Bishop, the late Monsignor Kataliko, being moved from his episcopal seat to another locality.

- Moral and material assistance to the war wounded and displaced.

- Protection for children fleeing enrolment in enemy camps.

- Taking unaccompanied children into care.

This effort by Congolese women to seek peace and freedom must now be supported by all of you present here at this meeting. Madam President, sisters of the entire world, peace returning to the Democratic Republic of the Congo will encourage Congolese women in pursuing their battle against poverty and all forms of violence against them.

Help them to achieve this objective by denouncing this war of aggression and by acting to deter all those countries which have engaged in war against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A war which dehumanizes Congolese women.

And even if, as paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1304 (2000) states, "the Governments of Uganda and Rwanda should make reparations for the loss of life and the property damage they have inflicted on the civilian population in Kisangani", would these reparations be enough to dress the wounds of the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of the victims, which will always be gaping wounds? Could these reparations permit one to forget the atrocities that have been experienced, the mothers who were disembowelled in Kabinda, Kasika and Katogota, areas occupied by the aggressors? Would these reparations be sufficient to erase the sad memory of the massacres of the Congolese civilian population in Makobola, Kasala, Imese and Kamituga?

What do these reparations represent for the families of the Congolese women buried alive at Mwenga? Mobilize yourselves, sisters of the whole world, to bring an end to the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo out of a duty of solidarity, and future generations will be grateful to you for it.

Long live the solidarity of the women of the world!

For the Congolese Parliamentary Women of the
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Lukusa **Mwika**

Cathy **Kabula**

Bekombe **Ndjoli**